

The Religious Historical Injunctions of *Taqwa*, and its Implications for Leadership among the Orma Muslim Women in Tana River County, Kenya

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Abstract

This study seeks to examine the interplay between taqwa and leadership among the Orma Muslim women. Taqwa (Arabic: fear of Allah) is a canonical concept that is deep-rooted in the Islamic teachings. In inculcating taqwa, the Orma Muslim women are to cling to every concept that is entrenched in the beliefs and practices of Islam. According to the madrassa teachers, one of the historical provenances entrenched to guide the Muslim women in their taqwa is Surah 33:33. The injunction encourages the women to stay at home and not to be involved in leadership positions outside their homes. On the contrary, one of the keenly observed aspects in Islam, which is highly guarded among the Muslims, is the rule forbidding the intermingling of sexes. However, the researcher observed that although this is a matter of significance, all the Islamic teachers employed to teach the Orma Muslim women are male. Thus, one of the pertinent questions that this study raises is: Why are there no female Islamic teachers occupying leadership positions to guide the Orma Muslim women in the madrassa?

In understanding this phenomenon, the religious historical provenances as engrained in the beliefs and practices involved in taqwa are examined in light of this Qur'anic injunction as comprehended and communicated by the Islamic teachers in Tana River County. The researcher adopted Synthetic Triangular Approach (STA) framework as proposed by Kim (2014). The research is qualitative by nature and engages phenomenological design in bringing out the lived experiences. In addition, the researcher employed ethnographic tools such as in-depth interviews, participant observation, and focus groups in collecting data. The researcher interviewed both the religious teachers and the Orma Muslim women. However, in examining the interplay between taqwa and leadership in this study, the researcher has opted to use only the data collected from the madrassa teachers as it dealt with leadership as one of their focal points. In analyzing and interpretation of the data, this study adopted Thematic Coding Analysis (Gibbs, 2007). This study will therefore look at the religiously underpinned gender imbalance of taqwa, and its implications for leadership among the Orma Muslim women in Tana River County.

Key Words: Historical injustices, religious, leadership, *taqwa*, madrassa

Introduction

Leadership among women has been an enigma all over the world. In Kenya, for example, it is apparent that there are only a small number of Muslim women in

leadership positions. This challenge poses a dilemma in a country where its constitution has cherished the ideals of a democratic and free society. An investigation into the factors contributing to the high rate of nonparticipation in leadership among Muslim women points to a religious interpretation.

This form of religious representation fetters women's progress in taking all forms of leadership outside their homes and has denied them the opportunity to contest for their right and freedom to lead. Considering that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) call for equal representation, this study advocates that religion should not be allowed to stand in the way that guarantees gender equality and freedom for the Muslim women to occupy leadership positions. The researcher observes that regardless of their religion, it is critical for Muslim women to be given equal political rights.

In advocating for this course of action, this study is not suggesting that the leadership tussle of the Muslim women depends entirely on the religious struggles, nor is it being suggested that putting any form of pressure on the religious authorities will bring about this freedom. Again, each one of the Muslim ethnic groups has their own distinct culture. A great diversity is found within all the cultures in Islam. The Orma Muslim women live within a culture. Thus, one cannot bring all Islamic peoples and cultures together and declare that they are a true presentation of Islam. This study outlines the concepts of leadership and *taqwa* within Tana River County. Moreover, in describing the concept of leadership among Orma Muslim women, this research also notes that there are cultural, economic, and political dynamics that discourage the Muslim women from participating in leadership. These factors include inadequate support from political parties, illiteracy, ethnic conflicts, preference of a boy over a

girl child, a lack of financial resources, gender stereotyping, and patriarchal structures.

Notably, despite the obstacles put in front of the women in regard to occupying public offices, there are many Muslim women in different countries who have managed to leave their households, have acquired an education, have started to work, and have forged careers for themselves. They have thus laid claims to their rights as consonant with their new position in the society. Furthermore, the status of Muslim women has been changing over the years (Ergun, 2003, p.111). Thus, although the Qur'an, Hadith and madrassa schools spell out many regulations and teachings about women's roles, right behavior, and societal expectations, how they are interpreted and carried out in daily life varies greatly from country to country, city to city, and even village to village. In addition, tradition, ethnic background, and climate play a part in shaping the life of Muslim women (Fuad, 2003; Smith, 2006, p.107- 123). However, among all these factors contributing to this trend, the historical religious provenances as entrenched in the Islamic system seem to endorse non-participation of leadership for the Muslim woman who inculcates *taqwa* (Abdalati, 2008, Akbarabadi, 2002; Fuad, 2003). Thus, a strong interplay between religious inequalities rooted in a *taqwa* injunction Surah 33:33 plays an integral role in undermining leadership among Muslim women (Agbetola, 1981). The researcher believes that an examination into this trend would encourage Muslim women to participate in leadership positions as provided in the constitution. This paper therefore seeks to survey the complex landscape between *taqwa* and its implication for leadership among the Orma Muslim women.

Problem Statement

The issue of leadership is a matter of concern not only among the Muslim women but it interests all women at large. However, leadership among Muslim women remains a heated debate in the majority of Islamic societies. In a published report by FIDA Kenya, women made an essential move in their political advances during the 2017 general election. The investigation showed that 29% more women contended for leadership positions than in the previous election, denoting a rise from 145 women to 172 women occupying leadership positions in the 2013 general elections (FIDA). Notwithstanding, this account makes it clear that meaningful obstacles linger for women pursuing elective office and that the involvement of women has been dwindling. This calls for a cessation of impediments that inhibit women from pursuing leadership so as to represent democracy in Kenya. One of the main quandaries in this paper is the Muslim woman who hails from a pastoral community and reflects a slow progress in leadership.

Leadership issues among the Orma Muslim women have undergone increased pressure from the more vigorous, prolific and liberal Muslim societies on their periphery. Muslim women are trapped in the outward Islamic identity without internalizing the ritualistic Islam that seems to oppress the needs of Muslim women (Afkhani, 1995, p.3). The most visible battle for women's rights in regard to leadership is still being fought. In this revolution, perhaps no other issue has been debated with such fury as the rules for what constitutes leadership among the Muslim women (Abdalati, 2008; Chapman, 1995; Warraq, 1995, p.138).

Islamic beliefs play a strategic position in molding the lives of its adherents. Notably, the Islamic teachers cite the Qur'an and Hadith in forbidding Muslim women from taking leadership roles (Awde, 2005). Hence, rightly guided Muslim

women must adhere to the distinctive roles as outlined for them in the Qur'an and the Hadith. One of the divine vestiges that demonstrate the extent to which Muslim women embrace what is ascribed to them is *taqwa* (Abdullah, 2001; Abdul, 2000). This is a distinctive power that is hidden within the Islamic belief system. *Taqwa* is an Islamic notion that means "piety" or "fear of Allah." This injunction is recorded in the Qur'an (Surah 2 and Surah 3:33). The scrutiny of *taqwa* plainly centers on its unequivocal theoretical rudiments within the framework of Islam. Outstandingly, this study noted that the issue of leadership among the Orma Muslim women represents the attitudes of many Muslim women around the world and have become victims of culture of exclusion and male dominance to this day (Agbetola, 2001; Barlas, 2006; Geisler, 2008).

The Purpose of the Study

The general intention of this research is to bring an increased understanding of how the experiences of *taqwa* affect the leadership possibilities among the Orma Muslim women. This is by offering a broad examination of the Islamic injunctions in the development of *taqwa* and how it affects leadership among the Orma Muslim women. The comprehension of this matter is hoped to set an end to fruitless arguments on Muslim women and leadership that have taken place over the years. It is also expected that the study would initiate a discussion by which the Orma Muslim women would be encouraged to participate in leadership positions as provided in the constitution.

Literature Review

A number of Islamic scholars seem to agree that the Qur'an and Hadith give detailed commandments regarding women's participation in leadership (Barlas, 2006; Maulana, 2002; Moulana, 2002 p.1). They record that Islamic teachings bring Muslim

women into the sphere of symbolic signification (Barlas, 2006 p.178). In fact, the Qur'an has more to say on the position of women than on any other social question (Chapman, 1995 p.154). The understanding is that every subject concerning women is analytically included in the concepts. The historical context of *taqwa* indicates that it is not only found within the pages of the Qur'an and Hadith but rather, it is believed to "shed light into the knowability and incomprehensibility of Allah, human reason, faith, illumination, revelation, scripture, tradition, and Islamic sermons" (Asghar 2008; Moulana, 2002 p.1). In this case, the understanding is that even if secular governments propose that women should occupy leadership positions, in essence she should allow religious provenances to prevail. Chittick proposes "the rendition of being in a cage where all you think or do is about God" (1992, p.12). In his experience, *taqwa* initially signified "dutifulness and undisputable alignment toward God" (Chittick, 1992, p.12).

Qur'an and Hadith injunctions on leadership among the Muslim women

Islam recognizes certain social inequalities, which are sanctioned and indeed sanctified by the Qur'an. These are the roles between the master and slave, man and woman, believer and non-believer (Lewis, 2003, p.83; Warraq, 1995, p. 302). In his argument, Warraq states, "A woman was created by God to be a mother, and a good wife, hence any venture into chemistry, astronomy, or geometry is against her nature, her needs, and the needs of her family (1995, p.318). Leadership is a form of allegiance and has always been sworn to one person (Surah 3:103). Consequently, by not taking any leadership role outside her home, a Muslim woman is said to be following *taqwa*, heeding Allah's prohibitions, and accepting his rulings. In addition, she adheres to the teachings of Islam as outlined by the Prophet (Surahs 9:79, 49:14, 33:21,18:110).

The principal scope of a Muslim woman is her home and her primary function is being a virtuous, dutiful mother and wife. These injunctions are consistent with the rulebooks and ethics laid down in the Hadith, Qur'an and in the broadly read discourses on women (Surah 33:33, S. 4:34). In emplacing this concept, the Qur'an adds records that women are by nature inferior to men (Surahs 3:36, 43:18, 4:122). This denotes that Muslim women are weaker than men (Surah 4:34), and impatient (Surah 8:36) hence not perfect to lead (Surah 8:46). Scholars who argue in this manner highlight the same concept that this state of intolerance brings a state of feebleness in leadership (Akbarabadi, 2002, p.42-43). They state, "Having two power positions in leadership will only create weakness in society and contribute to hatred and rebellion (Al-Hashim 2005, 200; Akbarabadi 2002, p.42-43).

Hadith knowledge in understanding women's issues is not an onerous necessity but a natural, normal part of Muslims' self-understanding (Mawdudi, 1989). Ondigo observes that they underpin the importance of leadership among the Muslim women (2009, p.25). The Hadith are clear that the role of Muslim women in the house is not lesser than that of a man. It is in fact even greater than a man's because she has a greater responsibility of teaching her children (Akbarabadi, 2002). Thus, while the man is a shepherd outside the home, the woman is the leader in the house, and she is responsible for the children (Sahih Muslim).

Another commonly quoted Hadith shows that the prophet's wives opted for complete confinement and immobility. The prophet is said to have commanded his wives "to stick to the back of the mat." He reported, "She who among you has *taqwa* does not commit abomination but 'sticks to the back of her mat' remains my wife now and hereafter" (Stowasser, 1994, p.116). The phrase "to stick to the back of her mat" is translated as "staying at home." This hadith is considered to be one of the strongest

and has been retained and strengthened within the Islamic law and jurisprudence whose framework was newly expanded within the patriarchal structures (Stowasser, 1994, p.118).

A point of caution and a sharp contrast to these hadiths, Siddiqi notes, that the prophet's wives were constant companions to the holy prophet and performed personal services to him (Agbetola, 1981). They had the best opportunity available in regard to the Islamic learning and they were well equipped to lead the women of Islam to a higher level of cultural development. They performed activities of all kinds as political, social, and scholarly. They had special duties and responsibilities as they were strong pillars in the edifice of Islamic learning and their contribution to the cause of Islamic law and the logic science, such as Hadith and the Qur'anic exegesis, is tremendous and without a parallel (Ali, 2003). They are a virtue whose exemplary lives were and will remain a perennial source of guidance and inspiration to other Muslim woman of the world.

Different interpretations concerning Muslim Women and Leadership

A number of Muslim jurists' view is that women are not to be involved in leadership outside their homes. Warraq observed that men are superior to women in virtue of their reasoning abilities, their knowledge, and their supervisory powers (Warraq 1995, p.312). Thus, Muslim women are reproached for not having any experience of the outside world (ibid.). Ghuram adds that due to their physical make-up a woman is prone to forgetfulness and short-term memory loss (Akbarabadi, 2002). In addition, during her menstrual cycle, a woman is said to become moody and exhibit multiple temperaments. Childbearing and labor may also hamper and impair their performance (Forward, 2016). Again, Islam speaks against intermingling of

sexes; thus, women are not to be found in places such as public institutions where intermingling is not controlled (Al-Hashim, 2005, pp. 83-86).

Other scholars argue that men are more rational than women and are more able to make difficult decisions (Parshall, 2002; Fernea, 1998, p.152-153). The female is supposedly driven by emotions and is thus unstable (Chaudhry, 1991). In cementing this debate, Chaudhry adds that it is an admitted fact that a man is comparatively more far-sighted than women, more capable of understanding matters and has a greater tolerance and forbearance (ibid.). In their endeavor to continue confining Muslim women to the houses, they claim that leadership outside the house is against the principles of Islam (Abdalati, 1998, p.114). Accordingly, power over women remains a divine command in the nature of things. Thus, Islam explicitly forbids certain professions for women such as assuming posts of public responsibility, being the head of a state, head of any armed forces, imam or judge (Warraq, p.319). The system and guardianship therefore claims that the measure of a society's degree of civilization is the position it accords to women (Warraq, p.321).

Contrary Opinions in regard to Leadership among Muslim women

Muslim reformist thinkers insist that every Muslim woman has a right to exercise her potential to lead. They argue that denying Muslim women leadership opportunities is nothing but a degradation of her dignity and honor (Afkhami, 1995). Quite to the contrary, allowing Muslim women to occupy leadership positions is a confirmation of a woman's being, fulfillment of her person, of her human dignity, and of her personal freedom (Mernissi, 1986; Ahmed, 1992). However, on closer examination Warraq observes that this interpretation of a woman's freedom is limited as it confines women to responsibilities such as teaching of girls, working in nursing homes when they look after only women (Warraq, 1995, p.318). Other contrasting

views indicate that leadership amongst the Muslim women is a matter of importance.

In responding to him, John Stuart Mill on women leadership says,

I am convinced that social arrangements which subordinate one sex to the other by law are bad in themselves and form one of the principal obstacles which oppose human progress... I am convinced that they should give place to a perfect equality. (Warraq, p.321)

Taking this argument further, Stanley states that,

The attack on leadership freedom on the basis of religious beliefs constitutes a grave challenge to all Muslim women regardless of tribe or nation. The fundamental principle and argument in this paper is that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one state. That although everyone follows a different type of religion, that is a personal faith of each individual, but in the “political sense as citizens of the state everyone demands equal rights of ownership.” (1984, pp. 339-340).

Feminists have often tried to deal with the matters affecting the Muslim women in leadership by staging various campaigns (Asghar, 2008; Barazangi, 2004, pp.21-39). Their observation is that the rights of Muslim women to rise in leadership position is very much restricted and circumscribed and is virtually impossible. They add that Muslim women have frequently suffered in their struggle against discrimination and oppression. It will be recalled in the mid-eighties and early nineties that feminists such as Fatima Mernissi, Leila Ahmed and others set their cries for justice for women’s rights were treated as platforms for the dissemination of propaganda (Ahmed, 1992; Fernea, 1985; Mernissi, 1986 p.88-89;). Since then, it became difficult to have Muslim women participate in the struggle against gender inequality and for full representative rights. In trying to fight for Muslim women’s rights they claim that it is time for Islam to reconsider its attitude on the question of gender and leadership. However, in their attempt to curb gender inequalities, feminists ended up receiving a fatal blow from those who are anti-leadership amongst the women. Their fight against gender inequality in Islam is deemed unwise and

dangerous, thus being accused of changing the roles as entrenched in Islamic attributions (Barazangi, 2004; Asghar, 2008). Notwithstanding, Muslim women have employed various means in their struggle to fight against religious injustices, such as demonstrations and protest marches. However, the issue of leadership has remained unchanged in all circumstances irrespective of the prevailing conditions.

It is apparent that Muslim women who are in leadership positions automatically upset Islamic laws governing women and the family. A number of scholars have responded to the issue of leadership as embedded in *taqwa*. Al-Sadawi condemns the vulgarity and scandalous nature of women who opted to go out and work. She said,

Those women of lesser education, but with intelligence and openness of mind, who wear hijab and work at home... are worth tens of those foolish educated women who make a wanton display of themselves, uncovering in public places. I know many female professors, doctors and engineers who are politically, socially and culturally illiterate. (Al-Mujama, p.82)

In support of the Muslim women who stay at home, Al-Hashim states,

The Muslim woman who has been truly guided by her faith and has received a sound Islamic education does not engage in leadership outside her house just because it is a custom or tradition inherited from her mother or grandmother, as some men and women describe it with no evidence or logic whatsoever. The Muslim woman does this on the basis of her belief that it is a command from Allah, revealed to protect her, to take her character distinct, and to keep her away from the slippery slope of immorality and error. So she accepts the ordinances of Allah willingly and with strong convictions accepts it as a revealed clear and wise command of Allah. (2005, p.78)

In cementing this argument, Al-Hashim states that whenever there is a conflict between *taqwa* and the prevalent voices, Muslim women should choose *taqwa* (2001, p.89). He advises the women to ignore and not seek the pleasure of the people at the expense or risk of displeasing Allah. In addition, he says that a woman is to have a deeper understanding and her own common sense, that pleasing people is a goal that can never be achieved. He adds, "The straight path signposted for the Muslim women is based on her unfailing standard to please Allah in all circumstances" (2005, p.88).

By so doing, Muslim women will be free from ridiculous contradictions, which have ensnared those who have deviated from acquiring *taqwa* (ibid., p.89).

As observed, the Muslim scholars have therefore interpreted Qur'an to mean that *taqwa* is a religious duty, a moral safeguard, and a social commitment which the Muslim women are to engage with at all times (Moucarry, 2001, p.63). The manners provided are comprehensive of worldly matters and religious matters of worship (Fuad, 2003; Smith, 2006). Every woman who truly believes in Allah and His messenger cannot but follow *taqwa* as an example of the virtuous women who never left the house (Al- Hashim 2005, p.79). He said, "...the main responsibility of a Muslim woman is her house and children." (ibid., p. 83)

Methodology

The research method adopted to investigate and describe data was qualitative. The design was used in collecting information about relationships and experiences by looking for correlations and making predictions based on the data (Creswell, 2007, p.60). In collecting data, the researcher adopted ethnographic tools. Thus, structured interview questions, focus groups and participant observation were adopted. The individual interviews were steered in two different villages Kone and Dumi A. Ten madrassa teachers were interviewed. In maintaining confidentiality, pseudonyms were used in describing and interpreting data. The informants were encouraged to express their judgments unreservedly on issues relating to their attitudes, knowledge and practices of *taqwa* and leadership among the Orma Muslim women. The researcher adopted Thematic Coding Analysis (TCA) for analyzing data (Gibbs, 2007). This is a Coding Analysis Tool Kit, which is a free and open source software developed by the qualitative data analysis (Gibbs, 2007; Pope et al., 2000; Stirling, 2001). The software concentrates on identifying key themes.

Research Questions

The researcher outlined three research questions to help in shaping the study.

- (i) What is the interplay between *taqwa* and leadership among the Orma Muslim women?
- (ii) How are the Orma Muslim women influenced by *taqwa* in taking up leadership positions?
- (iii) What are the effects of *taqwa* in leadership among the Orma Muslim women?

Findings and interpretations

In answering research question one, the researcher looked at the interplay between *taqwa* and leadership among the Orma Muslim women as interpreted and understood by the madrassa teachers. The madrassa teachers were all in agreement that male power over women remains a divine command in the nature of things. Out of ten madrassa teachers, seven were of the opinion that a virtuous woman who has *taqwa* is obedient and her subservience is firmly linked to her compliance with the Islamic teachings. As Sheikh Hussein stated, “*Taqwa* calls for the women to obey and not to question.” He added, “When she obeys, she is filled with hope and she will automatically be successful and victorious.” One of the other three interviewees indicated that there are reasons as to why Allah does not want women in leadership positions. He said, “Islamic texts are founded on one of Allah’s essential characteristics, which is reliable and truth and that cannot be undermined.” Then he added, “Historically women never got involved in leadership. Sometimes their emotions betray them.” The other two interviewees quoted Surah 33:36 in responding to this question. They reported that, “It is not fitting for a believer, man or woman, when a matter has been decided by Allah and His messenger, to have any option about their decision. The other interviewee said, “If anyone disobeys Allah and His

messenger, he is indeed on a clearly wrong path.” Sheik Abraham added, “What has been decided has been decided and cannot be reversed.”

Several themes emerged from all the interviewees in regard to why there are no Muslim women leading in the madrassa. The findings indicate motives such as a woman’s nature, women are by nature to stay at home, woman are more fit to look after her husbands and raise the children, staying at home helps a Muslim woman to meet her husband’s sexual demands, her reasoning capabilities are limited and that she is disadvantaged as a woman due to her physiological weaknesses such as menstruation, pregnancy, and childbirth. In addition, five out of the ten madrassa teachers were of the view that women do not possess enough intellectual force to teach in the madrassa. This is due to their femininity, which is exposed to dangers that could lead them abandon reason and propriety. In emphasizing this, one of the interviewees, Sheikh Abraham, quoted a hadith as narrated by Abu-Bakr, who was one of the closest friends and confidants of the prophet. He said, “When the prophet heard that the Persians had made the daughter of Chrosoe their queen he exclaimed, “Never will a people who trust their affairs to women to succeed.” In his view, failure inevitably follows on the appointment of a woman to be a leader.

Research question two geared to get the understanding of the madrassa teachers on how the Orma Muslim women are influenced by *taqwa* in taking up leadership positions. The researcher realized that the principles, theories and practices of the interpretations of *taqwa* are taken with a lot of seriousness among the madrassa teachers. Four madrassa teachers asserted that the Orma women exhibited a certain form of freedom, dynamism, and openness as they exercise leadership in their homes. Six interviewees were in agreement that public exposure of Muslim women brings anti-Islamic teachings to the Muslims. The ten interviewees indicated that the wives

of the prophet are the role models in defining leadership issues. They are therefore not to be involved in leadership position, as their biological nature would affect them. Mwalimu Swaleh had this to say: “It is an established biological fact that there is a difference between men and women, which enables men to be leaders while women are to be confined to a life of indoors within the home.” Another interviewee added, “This biological difference had not only been the determining factor in the societal division of labor, but has also necessitated the framing of special Islamic laws to ensure justice for both sexes.” Maulana, who records that “biological division of human beings into male and female is the result of purposeful planning on the part of the creator” (2002, p.39), raises the same view. All the interviewees indicated that to do otherwise is to show disrespect to the purposeful planning on the part of the creator and there can be no human progress without constant respect being shown for this decision. Nine interviewees added that women lack the knowledge of practicing public affairs and that they can be misled easily. However, one of the interviewees contrasted this argument sharply. He stated that, “The lesser degree in religion does not mean a lesser degree of faith or that she is less human, in that she cannot rise to the highest ranks. This only means that Allah himself has exempted her from certain duties, which may deem hard for her and not for a man” (Sheikh Hassan).

The research question three investigated the effects of *taqwa* in leadership among the Orma Muslim women in light of the madrassa teachers. The effects of leadership among the Orma Muslims is shown by the men’s ideal of female beauty in Islam which is interpreted in terms of obedience to a husband, silence and immobility. The ten interviewees confirmed that a Muslim should not be involved in leadership outside her home, as this would translate to displaying her beauty to other people apart from her husband. The interviewees on the other hand were unanimous in their

view that men are superior to women in virtue of their reasoning abilities, their knowledge, and their supervisory powers. Findings indicated that the madrassa teachers viewed women as inferior by nature. Two interviewees quoting from the Hadith said, “Women are weak and can be compared to a bottle whose crack is irreparable” (Sheikh Gwabo). Then Sheikh Ali added, “Muhammad used to say, handle the bottle (women) with care.”

Four madrassa teachers were of the opinion that women have a negative voice when it comes to gossip and loose talking and this affects leadership. The same is highlighted by Al-Hashim who states that in social gatherings women involve themselves in gossip and backbiting, criticizing people, plotting against anybody they dislike, and putting words in their mouth so as to discredit them (2005, p.73). On the other hand, six madrassa teachers were of the opinion that women have negative voices but they can be tamed through *taqwa*. This study shows that the madrassa teachers were in agreement that women suffer from weakness of faith and a failure to understand the true reality of life. Thus they cannot be entrusted to leading others.

In a patriarchal society where male domination is eminent, the madrassa teachers are of the opinion that women are to be led and never to lead. Thus, they operate according to that culture. Seven interviewees noted that the low view of women in leadership observed has more to do with local culture and tradition than with Islam. Another three indicated that the Islamic teachings have abetted in defining the meaning and historical memory in ways that were inimical to women such as taking leadership outside the home.

Critical Analysis of *taqwa* in leadership among the Muslim women

This research observes that although we may agree with the madrassa teachers in their affirmation that *taqwa* is central to leadership among the Muslim women, we

must disagree with them over their attempt to exclude a personal choice to be involved in leadership. Muslim women do not have to choose *taqwa* over leadership or leadership over *taqwa*. The researcher's argument is that a Muslim woman can lead and still remain a *mutaqoon* (one who has acquired *taqwa*). Leadership does not translate to disobedience to Allah nor does it minimize the established scriptural obligations. Rather, they can find in each an aspect of the precious diversity, the precious richness and potential that is given by God to all human beings. Thus, there is need to cry out against religious dilemmas, cultures and ideologies that dominate and hinder the Muslim women from engaging in leadership positions.

Although Islam is hailed to have dealt with women's issues, it has not critically engaged with the contrasting Hadith and verses that speak against women. As Qureshi notes, if someone wants to paint a peaceful portrait about the female population, all they have to do is to quote peaceful Hadith and verses of the Qur'an while excluding the violent ones (2014, 216). However, this research is of the opinion that Islam should not ignore the problematic traditions that oppress women, but rather they should openly discuss them in a bid to address real life situations and dilemma facing the Muslim woman of today. However, the picture that is painted in this study does not mean that leadership among the Muslim women is beyond reach. A good starting point reflects the objective to pursue change and it is worth the risk.

In summary, despite all the quite legitimate shifts of leadership noted, there are related acts that cannot be denied. Emerging is a system that lacks a rationale of Muslim women leadership as rooted in Islamic jurisprudence. There is need for the reformers and feminists, for example, to seek to remedy the social injustices suffered by the Muslim women. In addition, there is need for more people to speak more

directly to the need for modification of the women Islamic laws on leadership in order to implement the needed social changes.

Conclusion

Taqwa injunctions among the Muslim women encourage a mode of religious principles that lends legitimacy to repressive practices against Muslim women. The study realized that the Islamic teachers did not see the issue of leadership as a discrepancy but a social norm. Thus, the need to engage and re-examine the foundations on which the entire structure and comprehension of *taqwa* is built is of essence in the madrassa schools.

Gender discrimination based on *taqwa* is entirely artificial and only when it is addressed will the Muslim women have an effective representation in leadership. Forming a gender-balanced society is a collective exertion by all the stakeholders. Religious principles seem to hinder this positive move. This research notes that in order to succeed, a greater degree of unity and solidarity than what has been achieved so far amongst the women leaders is necessary.

The Islamic injunctions on *taqwa* are influential in shaping Islamic doctrine and lifestyle among the Muslim women. However, they also stand as a major indictment of the Muslim women who would like to engage in leadership beyond the domestic sphere. Scrutiny of the gender imbalance shows the existence of power and exacerbates disparities between the powerful males and socially disadvantaged women. The researcher realized that although the interviewees seemed to assert the religious equality of all believers, societally the gender gap is quite wide and continues to increase and there is no known means within which the Islamic system itself could bring it to an end. As observed, any system of exclusion in a religious order leads to social injustice among the Muslim women.

A mere appraisal of gender equality, however dynamic it is in its provisions, is valueless unless we consciously and contentiously create the condition necessary for its realization. To win this struggle, the determination to discuss the religious position of Muslim women by repulsing onslaughts that hinder liberties of the Muslim women must be brought to book. Only then can we build a powerful movement as a guarantee of ultimate victory in the struggle for leadership among the Muslim women.

Recommendations

This study observes that the Islamic teachings do not contain a complete system of law in regard to the present issues; the Muslim community may need to develop its laws gradually. It is worth noting that attitudes and habits that oppress women ought to be condemned. Moreover, anything that marginalizes a section of the Orma community poses a threat not merely to the section of Muslim women but to the female population at large. Thus, all the stakeholders are to be in the forefront in breaking the culture of silence and question widely accepted Islamic religious norms working against the leadership development among the Orma Muslim women. There is need for the Islamic community to come up with strategies that address cultural, religious beliefs, and ideologies that suppress the needs of Muslim women in areas of leadership. This study observes that *taqwa* in itself is a noble thing and thus should not inevitably undermine the social laws. In order to reach the nation's constitutionally recommended gender balance, there is need for an ongoing awareness of leadership needs among Muslim women. This study advocates for leadership amongst the Muslim women as a transformation of consciousness based in the reaffirmation of human dignity.

This study proposes compulsory basic education on leadership among the Orma Muslim women. This will increase the awareness and accessibility to principles

of leadership. By so doing, ignorance will give way to knowledge thus bringing enlightenment needed. The belief here is that religion is to promote rather than devalue and hinder women from exercising their full potential. Accordingly, Muslim women should be allowed to occupy different leadership positions because without them, their inabilities will be permanent.

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